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ABSTRACT

The seminar concept is a form of independent study that allows children the opportunity to learn as much as they like on a chosen topic while they are acquiring valuable library research skills. The child begins a seminar project by writing down all possible ideas he or she can think of for exploring a topic. This is done on a "brainstorming" sheet. On a "resource materials" sheet, the child notes possible resources (including the location, titles, and call numbers) available in the school. A separate "research" sheet for each source is used to record pertinent information. A "seminar A. V. Aids" sheet, prepared by the teacher, lets children know when the audiovisual materials they have requested arrive. Once the child has researched a topic and feels comfortable about sharing that knowledge with others, a seminar plan outline is prepared. The only three rules that must be met in the 15- to 30-minute seminars is that the speaker be trustworthy, considerate, and respectful of all people. Invitations to attend the seminars are sent to other classrooms and to parents, if the teacher so desires. Several seminars can be held in a classroom at one time, but each must always be taught by a child. At the end of the seminar, each child completes an evaluation form to express his or her views on the strengths or weaknesses of the presentation. In this no-pressure, no-competition situation, children experience success in a positive learning situation and develop strong public speaking skills. (HTH)

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Seminars By And For Children

Presented by

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I believe that each of us is gifted. As you look about you, keep that fact in mind. I also believe that every child needs not only to become aware of his/her own giftedness, but also have opportunities to develop his/her leadership qualities in a relaxed, meaningful situation or series of situations. With those thoughts in mind I formulated the seminar concept for children which I shall be sharing with you today. That plan has been explained fully in my book entitled: The Learning Center: Organizing and Implementing. I'd like to share that plan with you today. The seminar concept may be applied in a learning center/media center environment or within a classroom...and I've used it thoroughly in both ways. What is important is that the children feel free to develop their seminars based upon their own particular interests, hobbies, or independent studies. This form of independent study may be done in an infinite number of areas. It is the structure built into the concept that allows the framework for freedom. Sample topics might include:

> football, Beethoven, spiders, stuffed animals, Mexico, Colonial America, needlepoint, anatomy, typing blood, etc.

The range of topics is as diversified as the individual differences of each child. A child's independent study provides opportunities for learning in many areas as children plan and research their topics. The children learn the meaningful application, not only of skills learned in all disciplines but also library research skills as well.

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At this time, I'd like to begin sharing with you the structure(framework) that I built into the program to allow the child freedom to explore ideas and alternatives.

This is the 'Brainstorming' sheet(2A)The child writes down all the possible ideas that he/she can think of regarding the chosen topic. For the sake of example I have used 'Rockets' as a topic. I tell the children that even if they don't think the idea that comes to them is possible they should write it down...then later circle or mark the ideas they think are the best for them.

*INDEPENDENT STUDY: BRAINSTORMING

Study Suggestions for: _____

Topic: Rockets

List as many ideas as you can discover. After you list your ideas, let's talk about them.

Ideas: Read books about rockets.
Look up "rockets" in the encyclopedia.
Watch a film or filmstrip.
Read pamphlets.
Read a magazine article.
Draw pictures and diagrams.
Interview someone who builds rockets.
Visit a hobby store.
Build a rocket.
Start a rocket collection.
Plan a rocket seminar.
Learn about famous scientists who worked with rockets.
Start a rocket club.
Make a rocket display for the center.
Invent a goal about rockets.

The 'Resource Materials' sheet follows the brainstorming experience.(34) The child notes any and all of the possible resources available to him/her in the school environment..writing location of materials, titles, call numbers, etc. The checklist on the bottom of this resource materials sheet is meant to be checked by the child with exception of items 2,4, and 6. The learning center director or classroom teacher may initial those and that maintains the structure and accountability of the program as well as providing the essential support and ego boost to the child.

*INDEPENDENT STUDY: RESOURCE MATERIALS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

Resource Materials: _____

Library Books: _____

_____

_____

Library Pamphlets: _____

Filmstrips: _____

Films: _____

Study Prints: _____

Encyclopedias: _____

_____

Magazines: _____

_____

Other Resources: _____

_____

_____

_____

Aides check these as they are completed. See the director when you complete numbers 2 and 4. Also, *before* you complete number 6.

1. All information is written above.
2. All materials are gathered or ordered. (See the learning center director. ____) *(initial)*
3. Dittos are completed.
4. Seminar outline is completed. (See the learning center director. ____) *(initials)*
5. The seminar is scheduled on the calendar.
6. All is ready for the seminar. It will be presented on _____ *(day, date)*

The 'Research'Sheet is available to the child in number so as to enable separate ones to be used for each resource consulted. If the child studying this is quite young and finds writing difficult then another child might write the information for the child in an individual tutoring situation. You'll note that this seems to be somewhat what you and I might do for term paper research and that is intentional. In that way a child has a pleasant experience gathering bibliographic data as an essential part of research.

***INDEPENDENT STUDY: RESEARCH**

Name: _____ **Teacher:** _____

Date: _____

Topic: _____

Resource: _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

Publisher: _____

Pages: _____

These are some of the interesting facts I learned from this resource material:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please share this information with an aide or the director.

This 'Seminar A.V.Aids' sheet is displayed by the teacher in a central location (5A) Only one of these sheets is necessary because those children ordering audio visual material from other rooms, schools, etc. just need to know when they come in and be accountable for seeing that they are returned. I usually tell the children that they should check that list daily to note whether or not their material has arrived and then make arrangements to preview it, gathering information and deciding whether or not to use it at their seminars.

5A

*** SEMINAR A.V. AIDS**

Title	Item	Order No.	Name of child needing material	Check when called in	Check when returned

When the child has researched the topic and really feel comfortable about sharing that knowledge with others, and that may take some time, a seminar plan outline is prepared (4) If the child finds an outline too difficult you might begin by having the child note main ideas such as are shown on this example. You'll notice that they have to use a variety of skills here such as planning and sequencing of ideas. The child and I then look at the calendar and think ahead and select a possible date for the seminar...at least one week in advance. If the child is going to present the seminar in the learning center then we fill out a permission note for the teacher. If the seminar will be presented in the classroom and I am the classroom teacher then permission is either granted or an a different date is selected.

Seminars are usually best presented at the end of the day and scheduled as I stated earlier, at least a week in advance. Children are never refused permission (5) to give a seminar because of unfinished classroom work, etc. There are just three rules that must be met to give a seminar:

1. To be trustworthy
2. To be considerate
3. To respect all people

If the child follows those rules then indeed a seminar is possible. Those three rules are distinct success possibilities for ALL children.

In addition to in-depth learning on a topic children learn:

1. How to plan interesting activities and teach others
2. How to effectively share ideas
3. Caring about the welfare of others

***SEMINAR PLANS**

Name: _____ **Teacher:** _____

Date: _____

Title of seminar: Rockets

Number of children invited: _____ **Levels:** _____

Date planned: _____ **Time:** _____

Please make an outline of your plans for your seminar. List, in order, the ideas you plan to share with your group during the seminar. When you finish, discuss your plans with the director. You'll want to follow these plans when you give your seminar. Remember, *you* are the leader of your seminar. I hope you enjoy your teaching.

1. Organize the materials for the seminar.
2. Welcome the children and ask them to sit at the table.
3. Explain the rocket collection.
4. Talk about rockets.
5. Answer questions.
6. Ask questions.
7. Take the group outside and set off a rocket.
8. Hand out the rocket diagram ditto.
9. Ask the students to complete the ditto.
10. Display the dittos on the bulletin board.
11. Thank the students for attending the seminar and ask them to return to their classrooms.
12. Do the seminar evaluation. Sign the seminar autograph book.
13. Set up the display of rockets in the learning center.

Plan to come and get ready for your seminar about five minutes early.

6B

***SEMINAR PERMISSION NOTE**

Teacher: _____

Your student, _____, **would like to present a seminar on (day)** _____, **(date)** _____, **at (time)** _____.

The title of the seminar is _____

May _____ **have your permission to be excused from class to come to the center at this time?**

Thank you,

_____

Learning Center Director

Teacher Response:

_____

Teacher's Signature

Encourage children to include some of the following in their seminars:

1. lecture or presentation
2. audio-visual materials
3. display
4. dittos, made by the child
5. group participation
   a. discussion
   b. worksheets
   c. coloring
   d. games

The student sends out invitations such as this to all grades he/she wants to attend...specifying the number of children from that room that may sign up to come. The total number of people attending a seminar is usually 4-5 children for primary and 6-8 children for intermediate grades. Family members may be invited but only at the discretion of the child presenting the seminar. The teacher always attends the seminar to give moral support. If seminars are to presented in the classroom then several might be planned for the same time and children could sign for their preference. Those seminars could be held in different areas within the classroom. The seminars are led by the child and taught by the child. Seminars usually last between fifteen and thirty minutes, depending upon many variables.

7A

* SEMINAR INVITATION

Title of seminar: _____

Leader of seminar: _____

Day: _____ Date: _____

Time: _____

Grade level invited: _____

Number of children invited from this classroom: _____

Please sign your name if you would like to attend this seminar. Do not sign your name unless you are promising that you will come. Don't forget the date and time. People are depending on you. Thank you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

This evaluation form is completed by the child when he/she finishes the seminar and when the guests have left. Then the classroom teacher or learning center teacher writes some notes at the bottom of this form. Always work from a positive view on your comments. It's fun to keep a class seminar autograph book and note date, name, and topic presented. In later years the children may look back and relive pleasant experiences. Many children present at least three seminars each year.

8A

*SEMINAR EVALUATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please answer these questions as completely as possible.

1. What was the title of your seminar? _____
2. Did your program match your title? _____
3. Did you follow your seminar plans? _____ Were your plans complete? _____ How well did you plan?
4. How many people attended? _____ Did enough people come? _____
5. What was the best part of your seminar? _____ _____
6. What was the worst part? _____ _____
7. What things did you do to help your group listen? _____ _____
8. If you were to give the same seminar again, would you make any changes? _____ What kind? _____ _____
9. Were there any special moments you would like to share? _____ _____ _____
10. What are your ideas for your next independent study goal? _____ _____ _____

Center Comments:

Many times during the past twelve years I have presented both workshops and graduate courses as well as performed consultant services in various parts of the country sharing this technique with other educators. Seminars may be shared as frequently as a child is willing to prepare one and as long as he/she meets the three previously mentioned rules. It has been my experience that children really enjoy seminars. Why? Well, this is a no-pressure, no-competition situation with options/directions pursued because of INNER motivation. As a direct result, it is no great strain for the children to speak with strangers or groups of people who visit the school, as the need occurs, because they are quite used to speaking in front of groups. This kind of teaching/learning/sharing situation with roles flexible makes it possible for each child to experience success in a positive, meaningful learning situation.

*Obriecht, Carole Hillman. The Learning Center Organizing and Implementing; Ideal Publications, Oak Lawn, Illinois, 1976.